Annual and Final Project Reports at NSF: Contents and Uses

ESF Member Organisation Forum

Second Workshop on Evaluation of Funding Schemes and Research Programmes

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Rome, Italy

Background

- NSF's Mission: Promote the progress of science; advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; and secure the national defense.

- NSF OIG's Mission: Conduct independent and objective audits, investigations, and other reviews to promote the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness and safeguard the integrity of NSF programs and operations.

Overview of NSF

- Annual budget of $6.06 billion (USD)

- Annual activity:
  - Over 40,000 proposals processed
  - About 10,500 new awards made

- Approximately 32,000 active awards at any given time

Federal Reporting Requirements

- Outlined in OMB Circular A-110
  - "Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations"
  - http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a110/a110.html
  - Recipients of federal funds responsible for:
    - Managing and monitoring each project
    - Submitting performance reports annually and at the end of a project

NSF Reporting Requirements

- Annual project reports due 90 days prior to the end of the project's current budget period

- Final reports due within 90 days after the award expiration date

- Principal Investigator (PI) responsible for submitting reports

Contents of Project Reports

- Same template for annual and final project reports

- Five broad categories:
    - Participants
    - Activities and Findings
    - Publications and Products
    - Contributions
    - Special Requirements

- Submit electronically through NSF's FastLane System (https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/fastlane.jsp)

Details on Report Categories

- Participants
  - Project Participants, including co-PIs, graduate students, other students, and whether more that 160 hours spent on project
  - Organizational Partners
  - Other Collaborators or Contacts

- Activities and Findings
  - Research and Education Activities
  - Findings
  - Training and Development
  - Outreach Activities

Details on Report Categories (con't)

- Publications and Products
  - Journal Publications
  - Books or Other One-Time Publications
  - Web/Internet Sites
  - Other Specific Products

Details on Categories (con't)

- Contributions
  - Within Discipline
  - To Other Disciplines
  - To Human Resource Development
  - To Resources for Research and Education
  - Beyond Science and Engineering

- Special Requirements
  - Special Reporting Requirements
  - Change in Objective or Scope
  - Animal, Human Subjects, Biohazards

Many Uses of Project Reports

- Award management and oversight

- External reviews

- Public dissemination of research results

Award Management

- Project oversight
  - Monitor individual awards
  - Program officers must accept annual and final project reports; can reject for lack of content, clarity of work

- Program oversight
  - Broader program analysis
  - Highlights for external reviewers

- Performance budgeting
  - Use to identify accomplishments/highlights

External Reviews

- **Committees of Visitors**
    - Each NSF program reviewed every 3 – 5 years by panel of external experts
    - Evaluate the integrity and efficiency of processes used for proposal review and program decision-making
    - Provide a retrospective assessment of the quality of results of NSF's investment

- **Advisory Committee for GPRA Performance Assessment**
    - External experts with broad experience in academia, industry and government
    - Reviews NSF-wide portfolio to determine progress towards strategic goals

Dissemination to the Public

- Journal publication citations, submitted in project reports, becoming available on NSF's public website

- Through December 2007, over 16,000 publication citations added

- Number will continue to grow as more reports submitted

- [Example of publication citations](#) (NSF Award #9971791)

Recent Developments

- Proposed Research Performance Progress Report
  - Government-wide form for annual progress reports
  - Five proposed categories:
    - Accomplishments (mandatory)
    - Products/Outcomes (optional)
    - Changes/Problems/Special Reporting (optional)
    - Participants (optional)
    - Impact (optional)
  - http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/rppr/fedreg.pdf

- America COMPETES Act (PL 110-69)
  - Requires NSF to make available all final project reports and citations of published research documents

Critical element in post-award administration and accountability

- Provide program officers with information to monitor award progress and identify potential problems

- Means to hold recipients accountable for their use of federal research funds

- Provide NSF with efficient means to collect information for reporting research outcomes to Congress, other stakeholders

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